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A Home Maker in Uva

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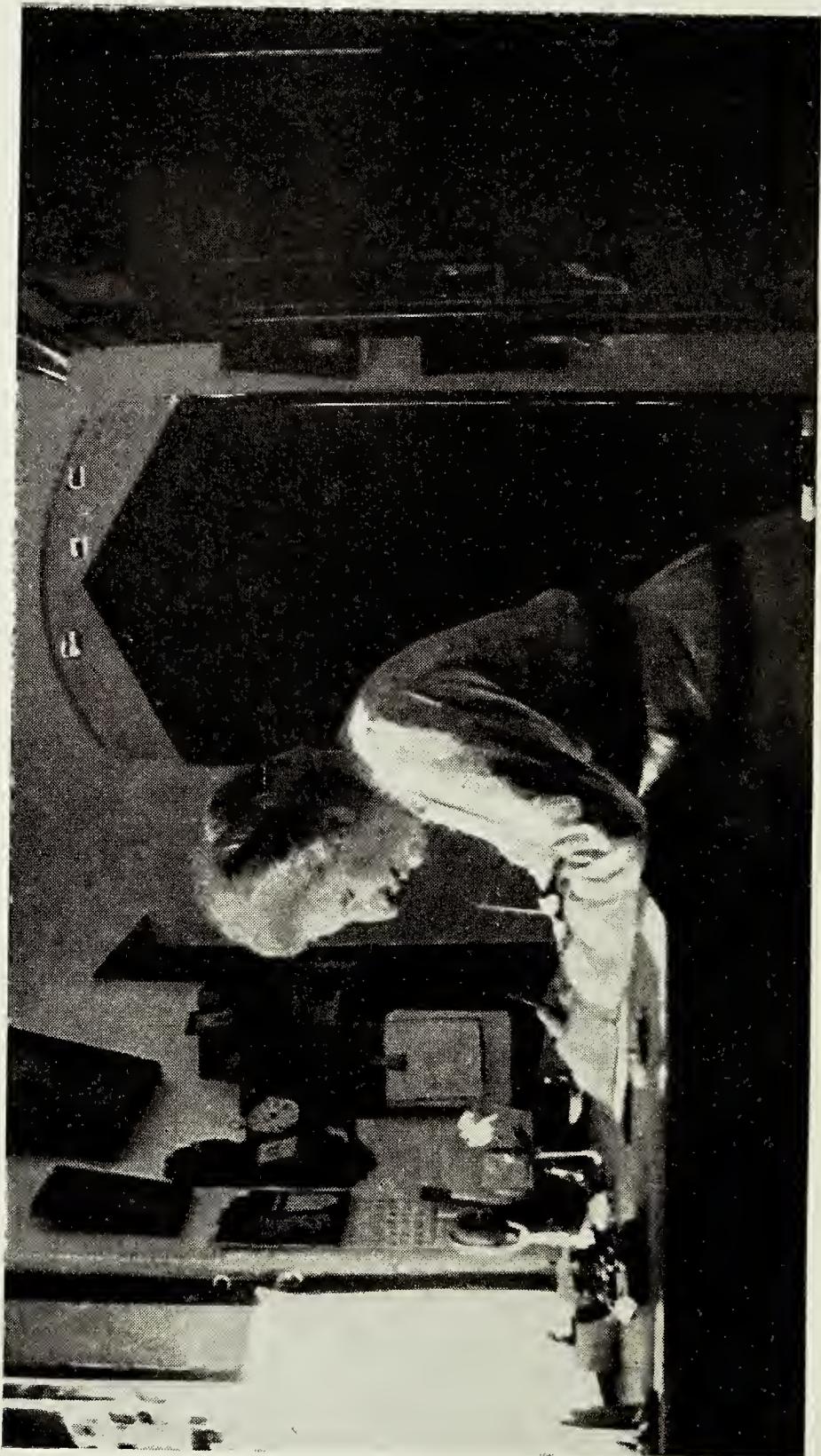
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MISS FANNIE COOKE.

A HOME MAKER IN UVA

BY
ANNA M. HELLIER

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PREFACE

FANNIE COOKE was a pioneer missionary in Uva and for thirty-seven years in the Badulla Home cared like a mother for a long succession of Uva's most needy children. When failing strength obliged her to lay down her charge and return to England her fellow-missionaries felt that the story of her work ought to be recorded for the interest and encouragement of others beside themselves ; and this little book has been written at their request.

Imperfect though the record inevitably is, it will at least show how greatly God has blessed her labour of love and what lasting fruit it has borne.

I

THE CALL TO UVA

THE mountain province of Uva in South Ceylon is one of the loveliest regions on earth. Its beauty has attracted the tourist, its fertility the planter, its abundant game the sportsman, but the lodestone for the missionary was the need of its people. "Shut in by mountain walls, forgotten by the world outside, they starved and died with no one to care or even know what happened to them." So wrote one of our pioneer missionaries, and went on to explain that instead of cultivating the soil that would have so plentifully rewarded them, they lived on roots and berries. Worse than the all-prevailing ignorance was the degradation of the women, and the unashamed vice manifest in every village.

The Church Missionary Society was the first to go to the rescue, but very soon was compelled by circumstances to withdraw, and its one mission-house was left empty. Friends of the Tamil Coolie Mission and the C.M.S., however, anxious that the good work should not cease, agreed to appeal to our Society. Accordingly they wrote a

letter to the Rev. Samuel Langdon, then stationed at Kandy, setting forth the needs of Uva, and when he had read it it seemed to him a call from God. One of the first steps he took in response was to consult Mr. Ireland Jones, a C.M.S. missionary, "one of the noblest Ceylon has ever known." His advice was : " Go by all means to Uva."

Mr. Langdon thought that at any rate he would see for himself what it was like, and made a walking tour there of 100 miles, tramping from village to village till his heart burned with pity for its neglected people. As he afterwards expressed it, " their wretchedness, superstition and vice rose before his eyes like a high black mountain." The words that came to his mind were, " Who art thou, Zerubbabel, that this mountain should become a plain ! " " But," said he, " I knew that the God Who was guiding me was able to open a way through the mountains of sin, even a highway to the City of God, and to make the wilderness like the garden of the Lord."

He returned to Kandy burdened with thoughts of Uva and from that time he and Mrs. Langdon prayed much for its people. A second visit, in which she accompanied him, intensified their longing to help them, and it was then that he began to plead with the Missionary Committee at home for

sanction—and funds—to start the Uva Mission.

The beginnings of that Mission do not, however, form part of this story. Suffice it to say that a Boys' Home was soon established in the Happy Valley, and that he began to gather round him a band of Ceylon workers reinforced by a *Joyful News* evangelist and his wife from England.

The Langdons from the first were deeply convinced that Uva must be won chiefly through its women, and that for this work, women missionaries were indispensable. So he sent an appealing letter to Mrs. Wiseman, as Secretary of the Women's Missionary Committee. It won her active sympathy and led her also to constant prayer for Uva. The letter was published in *Woman's Work*, and part of it must be given here :—

“ Mrs. Langdon has written to you about the condition of the poor women and girls of Uva. It has been weighing on my mind and heart ever since I started the work here. I have been thinking with all my might of plans for their benefit, and of methods for reaching them, and have come to the conclusion to write and beg you to use your utmost influence to secure for us two missionary ladies, to be sent out by the Ladies' Committee to visit the women and

girls from house to house in the Uva villages. I believe that some such course is absolutely necessary to the evangelization of the women and the permanent success of this Mission. The urgency of this need cannot be overestimated.

"(1) The Buddhist system provides no education whatever for the women.

"(2) It is exceedingly difficult to get the girls to our schools.

"(3) As a consequence, not one female out of a thousand of the population is receiving any education.

"(4) The immorality which accompanies this ignorance is terrible.

"(5) So far as our experience goes, the women and girls, when taught, are readily impressed by Christian truth. They would be most gladly welcomed to the homes of the people, high and low alike. Chief and outcaste would welcome them heartily and hospitably.

" You ask for volunteers in the last issue of your magazine, and I felt very grateful to you on reading your earnest appeal. Could you now ask for volunteers for this definite work? Surely there are ladies in Methodism who would respond to this call for the Uva Mission with offers of service.

" The work will often be rough, and the journeys long, for the villages are scattered.

But I know there must be many who will willingly brave that, for the sake of the Master, and the souls for whom He died. On the other hand, nothing could be more pleasant and interesting than this same work would often be. The qualities necessary are, a great love for souls, a true missionary spirit, good health and an ordinary education. If one of the ladies knew something of medicine, it would be a great blessing ; for the villagers of Uva are almost entirely at the mercy of ignorant native practitioners. Training for school work is not essential, though they would frequently have to visit schools, and such female education as there is, would be under their supervision.

“ If this appeal be successful—and I feel sure that God will help you in the matter—I should propose that the ladies live in Badulla, where the Government has just given a beautiful piece of land for building a school-chapel (girls’ school), and Mission House. From this, a large number of villages could be easily reached. Every facility would be provided to aid them in getting a thorough knowledge of the vernacular as soon as possible, and they would be helped in their work by Sinhalese assistants. You will be rejoiced to hear that we have two of the elder girls of our Kandy Industrial School here in training for that important work.”

Long before this appeal was written, God had been preparing a volunteer whose name will ever be associated with our Uva Missions. Fannie Cooke of Boston had always wanted to be a missionary but for some time was afraid to offer, because she felt unworthy of so high a calling. Finally, the intensity of her desire overcame her scruples and she made the venture. As a result, she was advised to seek fuller equipment and at once set to work to obtain it by means of study and school teaching and church work. In due course she renewed her offer, this time to be told regretfully that the Committee had no suitable vacancy. Her name, however, should be placed on their reserve list.

Disappointed by the delay but still undaunted, she took a temporary post and waited with the patience of hope for a "suitable vacancy."

Two years passed and then in *Woman's Work* for April, 1888, appeared the appeal for Uva. This, she felt, was work she could do—and yet, though she had waited so long she did not want to volunteer for it. India had always been in her thoughts and this unknown place in Ceylon did not appeal to her in the same way. Ought she to offer to go, or wait on in hope of some opening elsewhere? Great was her conflict of mind

and she knew there could be no peace for her until she had reached a decision.

On the morning of Easter Sunday she went to her own room, taking the magazine with her to re-read and pray over Mr. Langdon's letter, resolved that she would not rise from her knees until she was willing to do whatever God wanted. "If there is *any* place where You can use me, send me there" she prayed, and as she prayed the certainty came that if Uva were that place she would be willing to go to it. She had made an Easter Offering of her life, and God in accepting it filled her heart with His peace and has used her beyond all her hope and expectation.

Meantime Mrs. Wiseman had been much in prayer about this same appeal. With all her heart she longed to respond to it, and thought of Miss Cooke as suitable for the work proposed. She knew too that her Committee would almost certainly follow any lead she chose to give; but difficulties loomed large and to enter a new field meant a bigger faith-venture than we can realize. The Women's Auxiliary of that day was "little and unknown." It had only twenty-two missionaries all told; its income was not sufficient for the work already in hand, and medical work was just beginning both in India and China. What hope was there of the funds this new scheme would require,

involving as it did, two additional missionaries? Had not the present stations the prior claim for any increase of staff? She brought these questions to God in prayer, asking for some clear indication of His will concerning Uva. Then came the letter from Miss Cooke, with its definite offer to go there, and she felt her prayer was answered. Since God had called a worker, He would surely provide for the work. After that, events moved quickly. There was already a candidate in training for medical work and on September 27th, 1888, Fannie Cooke and Alice Lord sailed for Ceylon.

II

AN UNEXPECTED TASK

WHILE Miss Cooke was on her way to Ceylon, new plans were being made for her future work, still with Badulla for its centre.

Badulla had then a population of about 5000, all burghers and Sinhalese, with the exception of the Government Agent and a few other English residents, of whom only three were women. It is beautifully situated in a richly wooded and lovely valley, its red-tiled roofs showing picturesquely among the trees. The Sinhalese quarter, however, with its mean houses huddled together, could not bear close inspection, and their straw-thatched roofs caused so many fires that the use of thatch is no longer allowed. The town boasted two European stores, a bank, a Court House and at least one hotel. A hospital was projected, and as we have already seen, Mr. Langdon had secured a good site for a school, chapel and minister's house. Mrs. Mendis, wife of the catechist, had opened a girls' school there, the very first, and at that time the only one in Uva.

Some time in the summer of 1888, the

Langdons went to spend a week-end at Badulla, and on the Sunday afternoon Mr. Langdon gave an address in the Court House, his subject being the work of the Boys' Home, then flourishing in the Happy Valley. One at least of his hearers was greatly interested and impressed. This was Mr. Jordan, a planter slightly known to him and staying in the same hotel. Six months previously he had been converted, and dedicated himself and all he had to God's service. Then, fearing lest the many interests that occupied him might hinder his spiritual life, he decided to lessen their number and had come to Badulla to wind up his business affairs in that place. The rest of the story shall be given in his own words :

“ No sooner had I retired to my room that night than a voice seemed to say to me : ‘ You are leaving Badulla shortly and you have done well here. What have you done for Badulla ? ’ I had to admit ‘ Very little.’ Then the thought came to my mind, ‘ What about a boarding-school for poor Sinhalese girls, and those of mixed parentage ? ’ No doubt it was inspired by what Mr. Langdon had told us of the work among the boys. The thought became stronger and stronger, and in the early morning it came again so clearly that I made up my mind what to

say to him and what help to offer him. About seven o'clock I found him and Mrs. Langdon at early tea, and after the usual morning greetings told him what I had in my mind and what I was prepared to do. I can picture the scene now, and how Mr. Langdon instead of replying to me turned to his wife and said, 'Well, dear, is it not wonderful ! You and I have been praying about this for a long time and now the answer has come.' Then, turning to me, he said that my offer had made the Home possible.

"No sooner had we finished tea than we went out to see what land or premises for sale we could find. We were directed to go to the right, and after we had gone nearly half a mile we met Mr. Solomon, a clerk of the Court House, going to his office, and he told us that there was a plot of land close by, three acres in extent, for sale and that it had a house upon it. We went at once to see it and it appeared most suitable, being away from the native quarters, with many fruit trees upon it, and the house though small was well built of brick, with a tiled roof. It had three rooms, a veranda and outhouses. Having carefully valued it we made an offer by letter to the owner, then in England. His agent was very discouraging and said we should never get it at our price, but to his surprise and our delight the owner cabled

his consent to sell it for Rs. 1800, the amount we had offered."

Those were palmy days indeed, for buying land. Thirty years later an adjoining piece, only half an acre in extent, cost Rs. 2000 ! And they were also days when the missionary had a free hand, for apparently the transaction was completed without any reference to the Home Committee ! With the addition of a dormitory on one side of the house, and a dining-room on the other, Mr. Jordan and the Langdons agreed that there would be accommodation for twenty-five girls, and that was as many as they then hoped to maintain.

Thus the Badulla Home came into being, and Miss Cooke was met on her arrival with the news that she was to have charge of it. Truly a stiff task for a missionary new to the country and to the people and their language, and made all the more difficult by the sort of girls she was to mother, gathered, most of them, from depths of misery and evil. But she loved children and understood them ; and she knew that if this were the work God intended for her, He would see her through. He had given her common sense and practical ability, and if she were faced with the impossible He would give grace and guidance according to her need.

III

ON THE WAY TO BADULLA

THE two missionaries went first to Kandy where they stayed for a few weeks, studying Sinhalese and paying daily visits to the hospital. The teaching and experience gained there were of great use to them afterwards in their village work. But all the time they were longing for Uva and great was their joy when the summons came at Christmas to join the Langdons in the Happy Valley.

They set out on December 26th with only a few directions from Mr. Langdon to guide them and little knowing what sort of journey lay before them with its rough roads and precipitous ascents, its loneliness and its delays. As will be seen from Miss Cooke's account, it lasted nearly three days.

" We left Kandy very early in the morning by the up-country train and soon found ourselves winding up and up the mountains. The rail was only open as far as Manoya and from there we drove two miles up the pass to Newera Eliyia. The mountain sides covered with jungle and the abundance of

flowers and ferns by the road side were a wonderful sight to us and beautiful beyond description. Arrived at Newera Eliyia we went as instructed to Devon Cottage to get further guidance from the missionary who was staying there. If he were not to be found, we were to go sixteen miles farther to Wilson's Bungalow and then send a messenger to Mr. Langdon.

"Alas, there was no one at the Cottage ; we were not expected and every one was out for the day. On making inquiry we found there was a coach leaving at five o'clock, and we wandered and waited about till the time came. The coach was very rickety and the road very bad and as we jolted on through the unknown, darkness closed in and mingled with the rushing noise of waterfalls we heard for the first time the myriad sounds that arise from the jungle after nightfall. We travelled in silence, trying to rise above our fears and the impressions made by that journey are indelible.

"On reaching Wilson's Bungalow, we asked eagerly if there were a letter for us from Mr. Langdon, only to be told 'no letter for lady.' So we wrote to him and after arranging for a coolie to start at dawn with our message, we settled down for the night as best we could.

"Next morning we had our first real view of

beautiful Uva. We saw mountains covered with patna or jungle, mountains cloud-capped, silvery cascades, lovely flowers, birds of gorgeous plumage all lit up by morning sunshine. Below, in the valleys, the young paddy-fields looked like green velvet, they were so soft and beautiful, and far down we could see clusters of palm trees, while the shouts of children told us that near at hand were some of the village homes of Uva.

"We walked about most of the day, admiring the scenery but feeling very lonely and unhappy, for it was not till evening that our messenger returned. Mr. Langdon's directions were to take the mail coach next morning to Welimada where Mr. Braithwaite, the *Joyful News* evangelist, would meet us. So after another night at the bungalow we set off on the four-mile drive through the beautiful valley leading to Welimada, where at the Rest House we expected to meet him. But he was nowhere to be seen and there was nothing for it but to sit down with our luggage by the roadside and watch for his coming. People and children came crowding round us but we could not understand what they said and how long that waiting time seemed !

"At last we saw a group of people coming, one of whom was a European on a white pony. It was Mr. Braithwaite and from him we received our first welcome to Uva. He

had brought six coolies and a carrying-chair and we set off on the last stages of our journey, walking and riding by turns twelve miles along bridle paths to Bandarawella. Here the pony was harnessed to the trap Mr. Braithwaite had left there and we drove four miles further till we reached the path that led over the hill to the Happy Valley. There we had to turn out and walk the remaining two miles to the Mission House where Mr. and Mrs. Langdon received and welcomed us. It was a great joy to be at last with those under whose guidance we were to begin our work.

“From their house we could see the Boys’ Home and the 200 acres given by Government for the development of Mr. Langdon’s schemes. But we had still to see Badulla and longed for a sight of the building and land that had been provided for the Girls’ Home. Our opportunity soon came, for Mr. Langdon was going there on the last day of the year to conduct the Watch-night service and we gladly went with him.”

The expedition began with the two-mile walk to the mountain pass where the bandy awaited them and took them to Bandarawella where they breakfasted and visited the day school. Then followed a drive of twenty miles through wonderful mountain scenery, descending all the time by steep and winding

roads to the valley in which Badulla lies. On the way, they saw a Buddhist temple, its white dome standing out conspicuously amid a jungle of lantana and wild sunflowers and stopped to explore its wonderful rock-hewn chambers. These were full of images of Buddha and brilliantly coloured paintings covered the walls. The sight was a strange and striking witness to the antiquity and strength of the faith they were so soon to encounter.

Arrived at Badulla, they drove at once through the town to their future home and were filled with delight as they saw its beautiful situation among paddy-fields and the enchanting views it commanded of the surrounding mountains. Alighting from the bandy and scrambling up a bank from the road they followed a track through the grass to the spot far back in the compound where men were at work on the new rooms. "And then," says Miss Cooke, "as we neared the buildings my heart almost stood still. It all looked so strange. The bungalow in which we were to live had been built as an outhouse. The former owner had intended to build a large bungalow near the road, but died before he could carry out his plan and this was all there was. The doors were of rough, unplaned wood, inside as well as out ; the roof was low—too low to be healthy,

and there were only two tiny windows. There was no ceiling, only rafters and tiles ; the walls were rough, and the floors roughly made of brick and mud. The whole place was very dark and looked only fit for the outhouse it really was. It was indeed a contrast to the clean, new building for the Boys' Home and I turned away from my home-to-be wondering much about the future."

That evening the company assembled at the Catechist's house for the Watch-night service long before the appointed hour, eager no doubt to see the new-comers, and these beguiled the time by singing duets from *The Christian Choir*. After all the experiences of that long day and fresh from the disconcerting sight of their bungalow it would not have been surprising if they had been unable to enjoy the service. On the contrary, they felt it a high privilege to be present at the first Watch-night ever held in Uva and found it a time of inspiration and blessing !

Then came the return journey up the lonely mountain road. "The night was cold and dark ; our light grew dim and finally went out ; in the distance we heard the howling of jackals and the weird cry of many a jungle beast and bird ; from far down below came the sound of waterfalls and the rush of the river over its rocky bed, and how narrow the dimly-seen path appeared, how

dangerously near and steep the precipices ! We sang the Watch-night hymn again and many others, and just when the darkness was deepest came the first streak of light behind the lofty peak of Namunakala and soon the whole sky was lit up with the indescribable beauty of an Eastern dawn and we ended our long expedition in sunshine."

And so their new year began, amid conflicting hopes and fears.

Two months later, on Saturday, March 2nd, they again made the journey to Badulla, but this time it was to take possession of the Home and with them came Cecilia, one of the two girls Mr. Langdon had referred to in his appeal as being in training for the work. She remained with them for many years, their faithful friend and fellow-worker.

They arrived hoping much that their home would look more habitable than when they first saw it and that the luggage they had left in Kandy would be waiting for them. The two new rooms were certainly finished, but the bungalow still looking desolate contained hardly any furniture, there was no crockery besides one broken cup, and the luggage had not come ! Pouring rain did not increase the cheerfulness of the scene. They had brought food with them and when they sat down to their first meal this cup was passed round in true lovefeast-fashion.

Then they sallied forth in the rain to buy a few necessaries, under the guidance of the Catechist's wife and after that came a cheering welcome meeting arranged by Mr. Jordan in the old Town Hall.

There was little rest for them that night, for the wooden laths beneath their very thin mattresses made themselves painfully felt and the mosquitoes were so busy that their victims were thankful when daylight came.

We can imagine with what zest the little company arranged one of the new rooms that morning for the first Sunday service in the Home. Several Europeans attended it and Mr. Langdon preached from the words : " It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

At the close of the service Miss Cooke said to him, " Your text this morning shall be the motto of the Girls' Home," and so it has remained for the encouragement and inspiration of all who have charge of it.

IV

“ THESE LITTLE ONES ”

“ **T**HIS is the first time an important mission-station has been left at its beginning completely in the hands of women. We'll see how it works out. Good-bye ! ”

With these words Mr. Langdon departed on the Monday morning and the two women concerned, after watching him drive away, looked at each other with full hearts. There they were, strangers in a strange land, beginning an untried, difficult life with no one at hand to advise and help them. How utterly alone they felt ! How desolate the place looked !

But “ there is always God ” and had they been less alone they would not have learned to depend so absolutely on Him in all things great and small. To Him their Stronghold they had continual resort and the outstanding fact in the history of that station is the never-failing help He gave in every time of need.

We have left off singing about Ceylon as the land

Where every prospect pleases
And only man is vile,
but the lines must have often been in the

mind of these two pioneers as the revelation came to them in their lovely surroundings of evils worse than they had ever known or imagined.

In her first letter to Mrs. Wiseman after their arrival, Miss Cooke tells of a girl in the little day-school whose mother was about to sell to a life of sin and adds, "This case is only one of many that I have heard about during the few days I have been here. It is fearful to think of the sin in which these girls are brought up. I have been in several houses with the wife of our Catechist and the sights were sickening beyond description. How I longed to rescue some of the children from their vile surroundings!"

More descriptions follow of visits to the villages around, so picturesquely situated beneath towering palm trees, amid a wealth of ferns and tropical foliage, villages where the so-called homes were just tumble-down, evil-smelling huts, full of smoke and dirt, and where the people were incredibly filthy and ignorant, many living on a scanty fare of boiled leaves, covered with sores and often bearing terrible marks of the sin that abounded there. At that time there was not a girl in all the 800 villages of Uva who knew how to read or write, and it was for some of the most neglected of these that the Home was now open, little girls half starved, unkempt

and unwashed, used to filthy language, wise in evil and ignorant of good. But as they came to her one by one, Miss Cooke accepted each as a fresh gift from God, and it seemed to her as if the heavenly Father Himself were saying, "Take this child and nurse it for Me." The house was His, God's nursery, filled with His little ones. And the law of the house was love.

On the opening day, the first girl to arrive was Hannah, daughter of a drunken cobbler at Newera Eliyia. She was sent by a kindly planter whose pity had been stirred by seeing how neglected and cruelly used she was, and Mrs. Langdon said she could hardly look at her face without crying, it was so patient and sweet, "with the patience of a middle-aged woman who has had a hard life."

Others soon followed and it was a delight to see how quickly they responded to the atmosphere of love in which they found themselves. Only a few months later, Mrs. Langdon was writing of a Sunday spent at the Home when "Mr. Mosscrop preached on Beauty, and one of the most beautiful things I ever saw was the little clean procession of girls coming across the grass, under the trees to service, with the dear little baby and another mite in front stepping out sturdily. Among them was Louisa who when she came to the Home was as hard as flint, but

who now creeps under the beds from the far end of the dormitory that she may kiss Miss Cooke's skirt for love, on her way out after saying good night."

On the first Christmas at the Home, two of the girls were baptized, the first fruits of the lovely harvest to follow. News soon spread through the tea estates that a Girls' Home had been opened at Badulla, and to one English planter, lately converted to God, it was specially welcome. He was father to the child of a poor coolie woman, and his newly-awakened conscience taught him his responsibility and would not let him rest without providing for her a Christian upbringing. So he asked Miss Cooke to take charge of her.

As it was the first request of the kind, she consulted Mr. Langdon and learned from him that this was but one of many such children in the villages of Uva. Parents were always ready and willing to give their girl to a white man, and their hapless offspring were left to their fate, despised by white people, and regarded by the villagers with superstitious fear. To open the door to a half-caste child would be to introduce a very difficult element into the Home. "But," he added, "if the girls are left in their village they are always ruined."

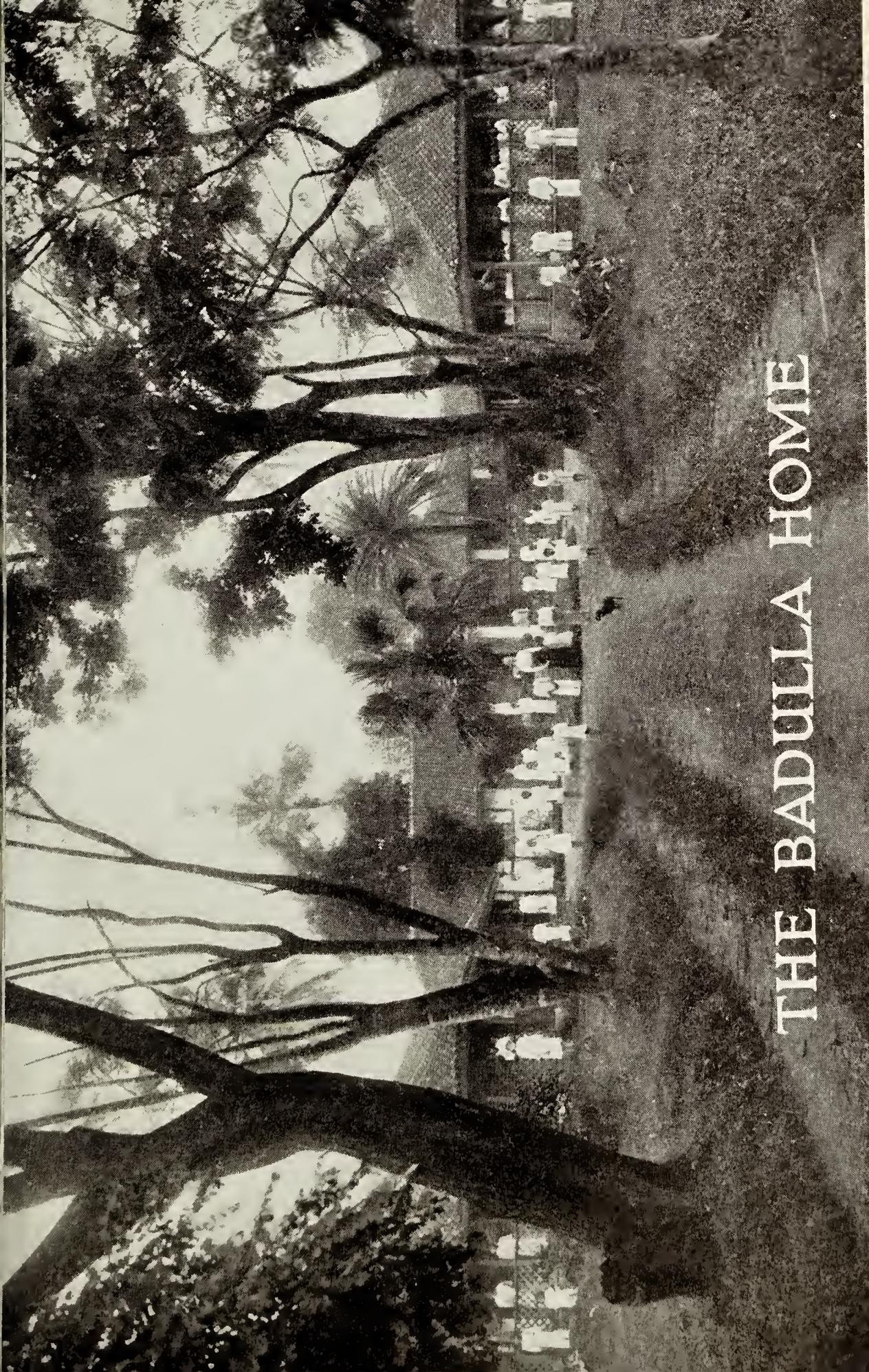
That settled the question. The planter's

little daughter was made welcome, the first of many Eurasians, as they were then called, to enter the Home, nor were there any of the difficulties Mr. Langdon had feared as regards their relation with the rest. Loved alike, and treated alike they made one happy family, sharing the same tasks and enjoying the same privileges. But there were outsiders who did not approve their admission as Miss Cooke found to her surprise. Once when she was telling the story of the Home to an English audience an indignant lady arose and said she did not wish any of *her* money to go to half-caste children. Miss Cooke hastened to assure her there was no fear of that. As a rule, the fathers paid for them, and failing that, a supporter was found who knew their story yet did not despise even these little ones.

From the first, the Home had good friends among the planters, and in its early days one of them sent a letter to *Joyful News* giving his impressions of the good work of which it was the centre, and describing some of the conditions under which it was carried on.

“ About six years ago, I started off early one morning from Badulla on a snipe-shooting expedition in the paddy-fields. On the way

down I passed by the quarters of an old friend where for years he had lived a kind of country farmer's life surrounded by the most extraordinary collection of animals I ever came across outside a zoo. He had, I know, monkeys, wild cats, dogs, rabbits, mice, peacocks, guinea-fowl, moorhens, porcupines, tortoises and jackals. I rapidly descended the zigzag cart-road till I branched off into a steep by-path leading to the paddy-fields, and here the road is rough and rocky, in fact, a get-over-it-the-best-way-you-can road, and then I came upon a river. Rivers are very, very beautiful with their moss-clad, granite boulders, sloping banks of feathery ferns and spanned by satin-wood bridges, but they lose all their beauty when there is no bridge and to get to the other side you have to go slipping over these beautiful mossy boulders, more like a frog than a human being. . . . I now made for a clump of palm trees which nearly hid a village unknown to me, although I knew the country down there, as I thought, very well indeed. Scarcely had I entered the welcome shade, when I saw two girls who had been drawing water from a well. With a wild yell of alarm away went their pitchers smashing on the stones, and off went the lassies, screaming that 'the devil' had arrived. Such was Soronatata six years ago, a village not more



THE BADULLA HOME

than five or six miles from the flourishing capital of Uva.

“About a month ago I thought I would revisit the old place. My old friend and his zoological treasures had all passed away, and his homestead (with the necessary additions) is now a Girls’ Home for poor, destitute little waifs and strays. One of those havens of rest that one cannot invent a name lovable enough for, where all seems peace and happiness. Instead of birds or hares, little Sinhalese girls are seen skipping about, and although they doubtless rival the hares in this respect, the poor birdies have no chance compared with the little ones singing their morning hymns of praise. Of the many dear little ones these ladies are saving from worse than death, by gently and lovingly leading them to Jesus, it requires an abler pen than mine to write. I will pass on till I come again to the village of Soronatata, where this time no water-carriers meet me, but, peeping in between the palm trees, I see about twenty little Sinhalese girls sitting in the veranda of a mud hut, listening to a native minister. Had there been twenty snipe sitting on a veranda, I might have understood it (although a snipe never goes near a house), but twenty children ! This needed explanation, so up I went. Mr. Ferdinando, the native minister, was very

kind and explained that this was Miss Lord's school. Here was a surprise, out in the very wilds ! And then he went on to explain how one or other of the two ladies continually visit these poor, little, benighted children, teaching them sewing, reading, writing, etc., while they explain the ‘Sweet old story,’ and then have to walk back this rough and weary road.”

V

STORIES FROM THE HOME

BABY LUCY was one of the early comers to the Home. Her mother had been the first woman convert in the Uva mission. Living in the Happy Valley she had come under Mrs. Langdon's influence and been led by her to Christ. One joyful Easter Sunday she was baptized and joined in the Easter Communion service, for the first, and, as it proved, the last time on earth. In his sermon that morning, Mr. Langdon, knowing what terror of death prevailed among the villagers, spoke of it as simply a falling asleep to wake with Jesus, and Lucy's mother listened eagerly. Only a few days later she was taken ill and the neighbours tried hard to persuade her to have a devil ceremony. They were sure that an angry devil had caused her illness. But the sick woman steadily refused, saying, "No, no, I am going to sleep and shall wake up with Jesus as the minister said on Sunday."

But though fearless of death, she evidently had some care on her mind and Mrs. Langdon asked her tenderly what was troubling her. "It's my baby girl. I know my boys will be

cared for——” “And so will your baby girl,” interrupted her friend, “for *we* will take care of her.”

Thus assured and comforted the mother fell asleep, and Baby Lucy, then four months old, was taken to the Home where she never lacked motherly love and care.

Not long afterwards, Mr. Langdon, being then in England on furlough, told this story to Mrs. Wiseman’s Sunday Afternoon Bible Class, and at once the members turned to her, saying “*We* must have that baby.” But Mrs. Wiseman demurred. “You are supporting one child already. I am sure you cannot manage another.”

“But we can, and we will. *We must* have her.”

So Lucy was adopted and each member pledged herself to pray for her by name every Sunday and especially to ask that she might become a mission-worker.

There did not seem much likelihood of this, as the years went on, for Lucy grew up an exceedingly self-willed, naughty child, a great problem to her teachers. Then, one day, Miss Cooke had her into her room for a quiet talk and told her the story of her mother’s conversion and peaceful falling asleep to awake with Jesus. As Lucy listened her face changed and a deeper change was wrought within. She went out of that

room a different girl, with a heart set on following Christ.

When her schooldays ended, there was another interview there. This time it was a question of choosing her vocation. What did she wish to do? Would she like to be a teacher? Lucy's answer was prompt, for her mind was already made up.

"No, not a school teacher. I would rather be a Bible worker and teach the village women about Jesus."

She had known nothing of the prayers that had been offered through all her past years by the Bible class and when the news of this answer reached the members it was indeed a day of thanksgiving.

And as for Lucy, after being trained by Miss Tyler in the Biblewomen's Home, she was appointed to Welimada, where she gained her heart's desire and preached Jesus to the women there and in the surrounding villages.

Maggie had a very different heritage, for she began life in the Colombo hospital as an unwanted baby. Her mother died in giving her birth and no one knew anything about the father or whether she had any relatives. The hospital authorities did not know what to do with her and were greatly relieved when one of the nurses took pity on the poor little waif and offered to adopt her. For three

years Maggie thrived under her care and then the nurse found she had undertaken more than she could manage, partly because of the expense, partly because she wanted to be free for other work and partly, I think, because the child was already proving such a handful. So being in Badulla, she found her way to the Home and appealed to Miss Cooke who was easily persuaded to add the again unwanted Maggie to her family.

In all her experience Miss Cooke had never known anyone so difficult to train and realized from the beginning that this new-comer would turn out "either very good or very bad." She was very clever, very full of life and fun, but as self-willed as could be and without the faintest idea of obedience ; she simply went her own way, ignoring all authority. Her school teacher could do nothing with her and Miss Cooke often felt completely baffled. At last, she decided after a more than ordinary outburst of defiance to try a punishment only inflicted as a last resort. Calling Maggie into her room she told her to take off her frock and put on the "punishment dress." This was made of hessian (coarse sacking) and had to be worn till the culprit was duly penitent. At first Maggie utterly refused. She protested that she *would* be good ; she really would ; she would do anything rather than wear

that hateful dress. For half an hour she wept and stormed and entreated, feeling the disgrace too heavy to be borne. But knowing it would be folly to yield in this conflict of wills, Miss Cooke quietly insisted until the dress went on. And it served its purpose, for the child having found the way of transgressors so hard, decided to try the way of obedience for a change. It was a very difficult one for her unaccustomed feet, but it became easier by degrees and in course of time, after many struggles and failures and in answer to many prayers, Maggie, by the grace of God turned out "very good." She said once, when she and Miss Cooke were talking of these rebellious years : "I was one of the worst. Nobody loved me but you." Certainly, nothing but love could have won that stubborn spirit and it was through the love of her mother-friend that she came to know the love of God.

Her love for Him quickened her natural delight in the beauty He had created around her and Miss Cooke has a vivid memory of her intense delight when taken with some other girls to visit a noted public garden. On entering it she stopped short, entranced and almost overwhelmed by the glory of tropical blossom and foliage that filled it, saying at last, with bated breath, "Oh, how *beautiful*; let us go into that corner and pray!"

When Maggie left the Home for domestic service it was with a heart set on doing not her own, but the heavenly Father's will.

Her two first situations, through no fault of hers, were not a success, but in the third, which she found for herself, she came to her own. It was with a planter's family and there, in a godless home, she was a faithful witness to the grace of God, recommending religion by her daily life and the way in which her work was done. Especially she cared lovingly for the children and on Sundays held a little service for them. And when her mistress fell ill she rose cheerfully to the occasion taking entire charge of the household and nursing the invalid as well. How she tried to use her opportunities for doing good is seen in an artless little letter to Miss Cooke written at this time.

"One day, my mistress let me read the Bible to her. I left it by her when I went to make her some chicken broth, and when I came back she was reading it to herself."

No doubt she did her best with the chicken broth as with the Bible reading.

The mistress died, the children were sent home to England and Maggie had to seek a fresh post. For a time she was employed as a village evangelist, but though she did her work well and was happy in it, she felt her true sphere was among children. So

she has returned to her former calling as a children's nurse and delights to pass on to the little ones in her charge the teaching she herself received in the beloved Badulla Home. And like so many other of its old girls she continues to send gifts from her savings to help the work among the children there.

One day, tidings came to the Home of tragic happenings across the hills at Welimada. A woman living there had deserted her husband and four little girls and run away with another man, and the husband, overwhelmed with shame and distress, had hung himself just outside the house. By this time our little Welimada hospital had been built and as soon as the workers there heard the news they went to look for the children. They found them huddled together indoors, crazed with fear and not daring to go outside because of what they knew was there. They took the children back with them to the hospital and sent word to Miss Cooke. Would she take them into the Home? There could be no doubt as to her answer. The grandmother claimed Punchi Nona, the eldest, but no one wanted the others; they were eagerly welcomed to the Home. The youngest took so long to recover from the shock and terror of her terrible experience that it seemed as if she would never again be a

normal child. But love works wonders and in the happy atmosphere of the Home, the frightful memories faded and she learned in time to laugh and play with the rest.

Then to their delight Punchi Hamy unexpectedly joined them. She had discovered that her grandmother was about to marry her to a man of most vile character and, being determined not to submit to such a fate, she ran away to Badulla. And so the four sisters grew up together in the Home they dearly loved.

Once the old unhappy days were recalled by a visit from their mother. She appeared suddenly on the veranda, demanding to see her children and announced her intention of taking the youngest away with her. Miss Cooke sent for them and says that she will never forget the scene that followed.

"There stood the mother, and you had only to look at her to know she was a bad woman : and there were the children, Punchi Hamy in front, and the three little ones holding on to each other in a line behind her, peeping out fearfully at their mother. There was no need for me to say anything ; Punchi Hamy took matters into her own hands. I was astonished at her courage and the way she spoke out : I can hear her now, as she said, '*You* are no mother of ours. *Here* is our mother (and she pointed

to me). *She* has done everything for us. We will have nothing to do with *you*. Go away ! ’ ”

The woman went, without further attempt to claim the child and they never saw her again. Did the sight of her girls so happy and lovingly cared for, touch her heart and move her to leave them in peace ? One would like to think so.

Years went by and Punchi Hamy married a Christian teacher and had a happy home of her own. After his death she trained as a nurse and now holds a responsible post in a Government hospital. The next sister also became a nurse, and all four are leading happy and useful lives.

When Miss Cooke had to go into the Colombo hospital for treatment, shortly before leaving Ceylon, the two eldest were among the many friends who visited her there. They brought her a gift of money for the Home and another gift for herself, glad of the opportunity for showing gratitude for the mother-love to which, under God, they owed all the blessings that have crowned their lives.

VI

BUILDING FOR GOD

LIKE many other missionaries Miss Cooke soon found that she needed to be jack-of-all-trades and nearly all her time in Badulla she was planning additions and improvements to the Home and raising money to pay for them. One of her first cares was to get the neglected compound into something like order. Only a broke-down hedge divided it from the paddy-fields, and the buffaloes that kept making their way in, trampled over everything and came snorting and stamping on to the veranda. And the only approach to the house was an uncertain track through the grass. So she set to work to plan a winding road down to the entrance and supervised its construction. When it was finished, an expert in road-making told her he could not have done it better himself. The hedge was mended again and again but neighbours found it so useful for firewood that she gave up the task in despair and built a wall instead.

During the first month twelve girls entered the Home, and before the year ended the dormitory had to be enlarged. Still hei

family grew and by degrees the necessary additions were made, three more dormitories, a dining-room, sick-room, two isolation wards and rooms for teachers. The Anglo-Vernacular school was built, a kindergarten-room added to it and she also carried out sundry enlargements, put up out-buildings and made very necessary sanitary and other improvements.

It was no light task to finance all these schemes for in old days there was no fund whatever from which building grants could be obtained for women's work. And yet, somehow or other, sooner or later, she always got the money required. Mrs. Wiseman, wonderful in sympathy and resource often found means to help her and at the end of five years Miss Tyler came, as Miss Lord's successor, and thenceforward these two colleagues worked and prayed and planned together until by their joint efforts our Badulla compound became the delightful place it is to-day.

Some of the buildings were erected as memorial gifts. Others were provided out of proceeds of the girls' industrial work. and when the compound wall was built the girls voluntarily went without tiffin for a month that the money thus saved might go towards the cost. There were generous friends also among the planters. And in

time of need, God never failed her. Once when the large dormitory was being put up, the work came to a standstill because there was no money to buy more building material or pay the workmen and the grants from home were not due. So, as usual, she resorted to prayer, persistent, urgent prayer. And then there came a letter of inquiry from one of her planter-friends. Another planter who had been doing very well in rubber, felt he had something to spare for the Home and wanted to know if help was needed. Miss Cooke in reply described her present straits and the next letter brought a cheque for £50. It was the largest she had ever received and taking it into her room she spread it before the Lord with joyful thanksgiving to Him for inspiring the giver to send it. This was followed up almost directly by an unexpected gift of £21 from the W.A. Committee to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the Home. To present-day ideas of expenditure this does not seem exactly a fortune, but to the missionary on that lonely station, in her perpetual struggle to make ends meet, it seemed a very big thing, and, she added in telling the story, "I never felt so rich in all my life."

And now, the once dreary compound, with its neat, well-planned buildings among the sheltering trees, and the fruitful, well-kept

garden has become, as one new-comer described it, "a scene of order, beauty and peace."

But she has done infinitely more important building work than can be seen in that Badulla compound. She lived there for thirty-seven years and during that time hundreds of girls came under her influence and their character-building formed her supreme interest and care. It has been her privilege to bring a very large number of these to know and love their Saviour, and they have carried the memory of her teaching with them wherever they have gone. They are scattered now throughout Ceylon, in the Straits Settlements and in Australia, and some of them have reached their Heavenly Home.

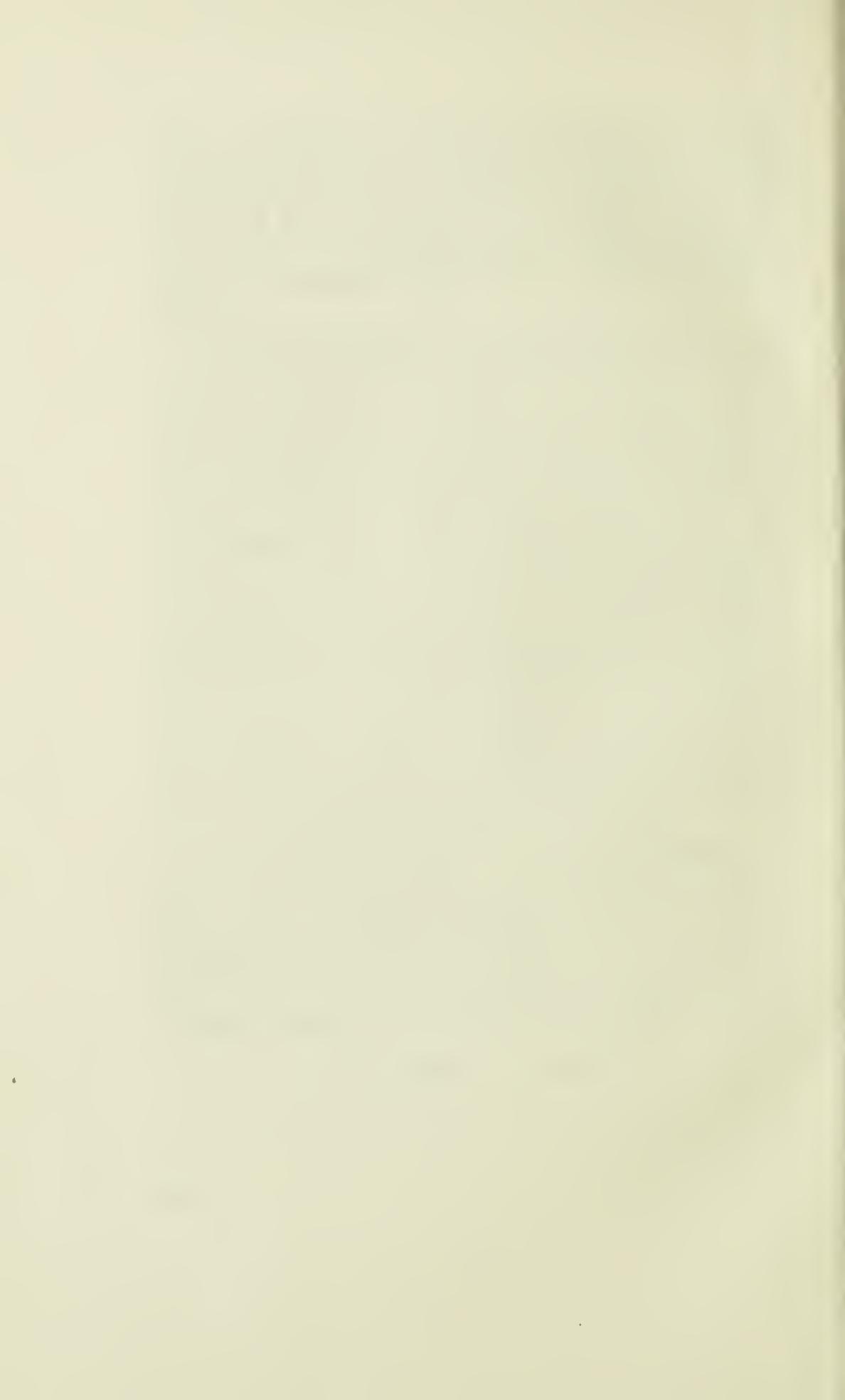
Many of her old girls are in homes of their own and it has been a great joy on visiting them to find that most were holding true to Christ even amidst discouragements and non-Christian influences. Others are hospital nurses, and some have done so well in this profession that they have become matrons of Government hospitals. Others again have gone out as children's nurses and many have been trained as teachers and Bible-women, the latter in the Langdon Home under Miss Tyler's care. Hannah who came to the Home on the opening day has

done excellent work as a hospital nurse ; another of the first twelve to enter it has married the manager of the Boys' Home in Colombo, and yet another is Menchi Nona, matron and head Biblewoman at the Langdon Home.

As the years went on, Miss Cooke became "Auntie Fannie" to all our South Ceylon missionaries and began to welcome her children's children to the Home, while from old girls far and near she constantly received loving gifts for the Home, especially on anniversary days. Well might she say, when writing of these : "Their letters were more to me than the money, as I read of their thankfulness for the training they had received and the years of happiness spent in the Home, and how they never forgot to pray for the work there. Some of them referred to the time when they had no mother and no home and in coming here had found both."

Messages like these are but a foretaste of the joy awaiting her in the Eternal home, when she and the children she loved and taught in this life will welcome one another, and when the King Himself will thank her for her tender care of His little ones, saying:

"You did it to Me."



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